

## Pollinator Protection Committee Meeting Minutes: FINAL

September 15, 2016-Vermont Statehouse Room 11

Committee members present

- Leif Richardson (LR)
  - Cary Giguere (CG)
  - Chris Conant (CC)
  - Mike Palmer (MP)
  - Ross Conrad (RC)
  - Eric Boire (EB)
  - Terry Bradshaw (TB)
  - John Hayden (JH)
  - Jane Sorensen (JS)
  - Katie Ballard (KB) (joined by phone)
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1. Meeting convened at 9:03 AM. Jim Leland, Director Agriculture Resource Management Division from the Agency of Agriculture, welcomed the group. Committee members introduced.
2. Linda Boccuzzo, Agency of Agriculture, reviewed her role as assigned to the Committee.
3. Cary Giguere, Agrichemical Program Manager, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, presented on the development of Act 83 and the charges associated with the Act (pptx).
4. Leif Richardson, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Gund Institute for Ecological Economics, presented an overview of native pollinators in Vermont. (pptx).

*Discussion after/during presentation:* JH: Asked about disease screening of purchased and imported bees (bee boxes) and their effect on native bees. LR: Noted difficulty of his fellow researchers in obtaining disease-free colonies for research. TB: Asked if there was a change in abundance of Vermont pollinators, not just decline in species. LR: Relatively unknown at this point, but could be measured. JS noted lack of information/baseline data on native pollinators, asked if other states in the Northeast/Mid-Atlantic had additional information or projections. LR: Limited surveys similar to Vermont. Species declines and persistence have been demonstrated elsewhere. JH: Why has US been so slow to adopt similar EU/Ontario regulations with regard to neonicotinoids? LR: Data on treated seeds shows a rapid increase since the 1990s. There is a question if pesticides are being deployed on an as needed basis following IPM techniques or more of a prophylactic use.

5. David Tremblay, State Apiarist, Vermont Agency of Agriculture presented on status of beekeeping in Vermont. 2016 was an excellent year for honey production in Vermont. Overall status in Vermont is good. 700 registered beekeepers ≈ 7400 hives. 250 beekeepers have not re-registered from 2015. Bears continue to cause issues. Between 2 apiarists (DT and temporary position) at Agency of Agriculture, over 100 beekeepers have been visited this year. Reasons for visits ranged from: swarms, odd bee behavior, aggressive hives, queen concerns (none or multiple) and required

inspections. Concerns of beekeepers: loss of forage, varroa mites, lack of areas to start operations because of “2-mile radius” requirements.

In Vermont this year 6 cases of European Foul brood, 4 cases of American Foul Brood. 18 colonies/hive equipment have been burned. Vermont is still importing nucs (hive “starter kits”) from the South. There are concerns over quality of imported nucs.

Vermont has ≈ 40 commercial beekeepers, most others are backyard operations. Successful operations all use different management strategies.

*Discussion after/during presentation:* TB: What is the 2-mile regulation and is it followed? DT: If a beekeeper has more than 15 colonies, the beekeeper has a 2-mile buffer from additional commercial (15+) operations (unless on their own property) There are some exemptions. MP/RC indicated that it is somewhat respected, but not always and beekeepers unlikely to report. KB: Is there any geographic relationship to disease/pest issues? DT: Not really. RC: Management of hives is a strong correlator of hive health. Discussion about mite/disease management practices and differences between commercial and backyard beekeepers. Role of state apiarist in containing disease outbreaks was reinforced. Need for training of beekeepers (backyard/new) was identified as a definite need. Significant increase in number and diversity of backyard beekeepers in Vermont since 2006. Questions about disease spread between native and managed bees were discussed. LR: Varroa mites do not affect native bees, but other diseases can be. Flowers visited by both types are pollinators can be reservoirs for diseases and pests. Other vectors can travel between pollinators. DT noted that New Hampshire has no apiary program and New York has limited program, making disease and pest pressure in Vermont more challenging. JS: What are top 3 things the Apiary Program needs? DT: more staff for inspections/increased outreach, better oversight of sales/imported nucs, increased forage/habitat.

Discussion about feral/abandoned hives. Beekeepers indicate that not as common as it used to be. MP unaware of any continuously feral hives.

Discussion over compliance rate for registration of hives and fines for unregistered hives. Agency can fine \$250; this has never been done. Registration of hives has been required for a long time, but the \$10 fee only went into effect 14-16 months ago. So that is new for beekeepers. When \$10 fee was implemented, 50% of previously registered apiaries did not register. Some may have been closed for a while and never updated information with the Agency, other beekeepers are choosing not to register.

6. Cary Giguere, presented on current state and federal status of pesticide regulations. (pptx).

*Discussion after/during presentation:* JS: What is a treated article? CG: An article treated with a pesticide to protect the article itself e.g., utility poles, treated seeds. RC: Is a plant that has been treated a treated article. CG: will look into. TB: How often are acute/pesticide bee kills in Vermont? MP: In orchards has seen in his own hives-not reported. Currently does not see pesticide loss in his own hives which are all located in corn fields. RC: Noted difficulty in seeing effects from systemic. MP noted he sees no effect and had minimal overwintering loss. Before he talks to field owners about their management practices (use of treated seed) wants proof/data. KB: Are neonicotinoids only used in treated seeds? CG: Other industries and uses exist-ornamental, lawn care, golf courses,

orchards all use. MP: Do fungicide products have pollinator protection language on the label? CG: Some do, some don't. There are some fungicides on the EPA's 76 highly toxic to pollinators active ingredient list that are currently being evaluated specifically for pollinators.

CG mentioned aerial mosquito spraying in South Carolina (for Zika) which had made news because of resultant bee kills. Vermont's Arbovirus Surveillance & Response Plan prevents a similar thing from happening in Vermont (products allowed to be used, notifications of beekeepers all different than South Carolina.) MP noted that previous Vermont aerial applications for EEE resulted in no bee loss. State Entomologist (Alan Graham) in the room, identified as a resource.

7. Jeff Comstock, Soil Scientist, Agency of Agriculture, past president of AAPCO, presented on the guidance document for the framework and critical elements of State Pollinator Protection Plans developed by the national working group, in coordination with the US EPA (pptx).

*Discussion after/during presentation:* Committee identified issues of how to incorporate native pollinators into this state format plan. All noted it could be challenging, but is something to consider.

8. General discussion:

Committee noted a significant time and commitments are required by the Act. General consensus that having a pollinator protection plan finalized by January is unlikely, better goal was a framework or draft plan which members could then present to respective organizations in winter/spring meetings. This would require extension of Committee's timeline. CG thinks legislature likely amenable to that. Jim Leland noted that the report in January to the legislature could include a recommendation to extend the deadline for that deliverable. Committee had a general consensus that obtaining many stakeholder's (public & industry) input are essential and part of their charge.

9. Nomination of Chair discussion.

Eric Boire nominated Terry Bradshaw. Jane Sorenson seconded the motion. All committee member voted in favor, including Katie Ballard via phone.

Next steps discussed. Inquiry about open meeting laws, CG said Agency of Agriculture will get those questions answered for Committee. December meeting will need to be rescheduled. Statehouse venue agreed upon. No comments from the public.

10. Mike Palmer made a motion to adjourn meeting. Eric Boire seconded. All committee member voted in favor, including Katie Ballard via phone

**Meeting adjourned at 12:11.**

- Submitted LAB 9/16/2016, edited 10/11/16; approved w/edits 10/12/2016

#### Others attending

- Jim Leland, Agency of Agriculture
- Linda Boccuzzo, Agency of Agriculture
- Jeff Comstock, Agency of Agriculture
- Margaret Laggis, lobbyist
- Robert Koethe, EPA R1
- David Tremblay, Agency of Agriculture
- Anna Smith, Agency of Agriculture
- Craig Di Giammarino, VTrans
- Jarod Wilcox, Green Mountain Power
- Nat Shambaugh, public
- Chris O'Keefe, Vermont Farm Bureau
- Kevin Komer, Vermont Golf Course Superintendents Association
- Andrea Stauder, Rural Vermont
- Debra Marckres, public
- Robb Kidd, Sierra Club
- Bethany Creaser, Agency of Agriculture
- Alan Graham, Agency of Agriculture
- Matt Wood, Agency of Agriculture
- Doug Johnstone, Agency of Agriculture
- Dave Huber, Agency of Agriculture
- Anne Macmillan, Agency of Agriculture